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Wm Billinghurst
Oakenshaw.
The Gift of the Author.

A

SERMON

ON

CLEANLINESS,

By the Revd. BORLASE WILLOCK, M. A.

BRITISH MUSEUM
29 APR 54

An Attention to outward Cleanliness, recommended as a Virtue;

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED, IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF BLACKBURN,

ON

SUNDAY THE 17th OF JULY, 1785,

BY THE REVD. BORLASE WILLOCK, M. A.

WITH A VIEW TOWARDS PREVENTING

THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF AN

ALARMING EPIDEMICAL FEVER,

WHICH HAS RAGED IN THAT TOWN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF SEVERAL GENTLEMEN

WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE DELIVERY.

PRINTED FOR N. BINNS, PRESTON,

MDCCLXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM
29
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APR

To the Inhabitants

Of the Town and Neighbourhood

Of BLACKBURN,

This Diſcourſe is,

With all Submiſſion,

Dedicated;

As a Token of Gratitude

For the many Favors

They have conferred upon

Their Obliged,

Grateful,

And Devoted,

Servant,

BORLASE WILLOCK.

PREFACE.

WHEN I delivered this Sermon from the pulpit, I had not the moſt diſtant intentions of publiſhing it. The repeated requeſts of a few friends have, however, prevailed upon me to ſend it into the world: And, I hope it will, in ſome meaſure, anſwer the end propoſed.

THAT Cleanlineſs is a virtue, will, I am perſuaded, be diſputed by few, who have enjoyed the advantage of a good education, and are bleſſed, in any degree, with refinement of ſentiment. And, that it is a ſubject of too trifling a nature for a Sermon; will be ſuggeſted, only by thoſe ſons of *fanaticiſm*, whoſe deluſions are as ſuperior to the influence of reaſon, as they are reproachful to the Goſpel of JESUS CHRIST.

FAR be it from me, however, to inſinuate any thing which may have a tendency to abate the zealous fervor of unaffected piety, or to weaken that confidence in the Divine Favor, which is founded ſolely upon the merits and interceſſion of JESUS CHRIST. But, ſurely, the Goſpel does no where enjoin an attention

to particular modes of faith, at the expenſe of every moral duty; though it repreſents the moſt ſplendid appearances of virtue of no value, unleſs a lively faith in JESUS CHRIST be the root from which they ſpring.

INDUSTRY, frugality, and temperance, are virtues which are practiced, in their full extent, by every one who is a chriſtian in reality: And, an attention to preſerve our lives, by every proper means, is ſo far from being diſpleaſing to our Creator, that, the neglect of it muſt ſeem an impeachment of his wiſdom, and be highly offenſive to his infinite purity.

AN attempt then to recommend an attention to outward cleanlineſs, which is abſolutely neceſſary to the preſervation of health, through the medium of a Sermon; will, I hope, be conſidered as an undertaking, if not ſo highly uſeful as could be wiſhed, yet, at leaſt, as worthy of ſome countenance from thoſe, whoſe ſtations in life, afford them an influence over the minds of the ignorant, and inconſiderate part of their fellow-creatures.

THE rich are as much concerned in the prevention of epidemical diſorders as the poor; and many of thoſe diſtempers, eſpecially, putrid and malignant fevers, the plague, &c. which ſometimes threaten the depopulation of countries,

countries, generally, owe their origin to the want of an attention to cleanlineſs in the poorer ſort of people. But, when once they are propagated, they are as liable to attack the manſions of the affluent, as the cottage of the pauper.

Besides the dangerous epidemical fever, which has raged in this town, and in ſeveral parts of this county; another circumſtance, which prompted me to a ſerious conſideration of this ſubject, was a view of the deplorable ſituation of numbers of poor families in times of ſickneſs, when I have been called upon to viſit them in my official capacity.

It is really dreadful to a degree to enter into one of theſe houſes at ſuch a time. Were I to deſcribe what I have witneſſed upon theſe occaſions, and what I have ſuffered from the *effluvia*, which has filled the room wherein the ſick has been laid, it would appear almoſt incredible to thoſe who are unacquainted with ſuch ſcenes.

It is well known how eager the poor are to viſit their ſick friends in crowds; and, it is equally certain, that, at ſuch times, cleanlineſs is not only neglected; but every avenue, which might introduce a freſh current of air into the ſick perſon's apartment, is carefully blocked

up. Theſe are cauſes which render the air putrid and unwholeſome in a ſhort time, and, not only hinder the recovery of the ſick, but, increaſe their diſorders to ſo infectious a degree, as to endanger the lives of any who approach their dwelling to adminiſter relief, or to aſſiſt in performing the laſt offices of humanity.

THESE conſiderations will, I hope, merit the notice of every peruſer of this performance; and plead, in ſome meaſure, for the author's preſumption in ſuppoſing, that any productions of his are of ſufficient conſequence to engage the attention of the public.

BLACKBURN, *Auguſt* 8, 1785.

A

SERMON, &c.

LEVITICUS viii. 6.

"And Moſes brought Aaron and his ſons, and waſhed them with water."

IT is a remark which has more than the ſanction of antiquity to recommend it, that few of the jewiſh ceremonies were of ſuch a nature as not to convey inſtruction to the attentive obſerver;—but that they all were either typical of ſomething relative to the chriſtian diſpenſation, or had a tendency to promote the conveniences and happineſs of life.

I CONCEIVE this remark to be ſo obviouſly juſt, that I think it unneceſſary to offer you any formal proof of its propriety.

WITH reſpect to what is recorded in the text, of "Moſes bringing Aaron and his ſons, and waſhing them with water" at the beginning of the ſacred ceremony of conſecration, we are naturally led to reflect upon, and to admire, that reſpect which was paid to decency and cleanlineſs in every part of their religious worſhip. And not only ſo; but we are hence directed to conclude, that their regard for cleanlineſs muſt unavoidably have ſhewn itſelf in every ſituation of life; and through all thoſe offices which are calculated to promote the welfare and happineſs of civil ſociety.

THE attention which this people paid to cleanlineſs proceeded from the moſt preſſing motives.

IN the firſt place, They were injoined by the poſitive command of God.

IN all the inſtructions which they received from heaven, relative to their ſacrifices, a ſtrict attention to cleanlineſs was always inculcated. The beaſt that was to be ſlain; the altar on which it was to be offered; and the prieſt appointed to officiate at the ſolemn ceremony; were all commanded, in ſcripture language, "to be clean." Several previous ceremonies were to be obſerved as means of purification, and the leaſt neglect in this particular, not only rendered this part of their religious worſhip unacceptable to the Divine Being, but, ſubjected them to the dreadful conſequences of his high diſpleaſure.

SECONDLY, The warmth of the climate in which they lived, made an attention to cleanlineſs more immediately neceſſary, as a preſervative of health.

THAT cleanlineſs is a great preſervative of health, is well known, even in the coldeſt climate; but muſt be more ſo in thoſe regions, which lie under the ſun, and are ſcorched with intenſe heat for the greateſt part of the year. Indeed, it may rationally be ſuppoſed, that, had not the Jews paid a ſtrict attention to this particular, few of them could have exiſted long in the deſart. Had they, therefore, received no inſtructions on this head immediately from heaven, or had they never been taught to eſteem a regard for cleanlineſs as pleaſing to the Almighty; yet, the firſt law of nature—that law to which the moſt barbarous of mankind yield a ready obedience, SELF-PRESERVATION, would have been a ſufficient motive to have directed their attention to that, with which their health, and happineſs, nay, their exiſtence itſelf, was ſo cloſely connected.

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, They had a regard to outward cleanlineſs, as it was intended to typify inward purity, and cleanlineſs of heart.

WITHOUT this—without our religion has a tendency to produce in us an hatred of the defilements of ſin, and an affectionate regard for the beauties of holineſs—it will not—it cannot be productive of thoſe benefits which its divine Author intended it ſhould be—nay, it cannot be a religion which has any pretentions to claim God for its Author. This regard, then, to outward cleanlineſs, as expreſſive of inward purity of heart, muſt have been highly uſeful; and, if we conſider it as having any reference to the chriſtian diſpenſation—as typical of the purity of that heart, which is cleanſed from its defilements by the blood and righteouſneſs of our GLORIOUS REDEEMER—how exalted an idea muſt we conceive of it!

IT will not, I hope, be deemed an infringement upon the dignity of this ſacred place; nor, be thought unworthy your attention; if I enlarge upon the virtue of cleanlineſs, and recommend it from ſuch motives as the nature of the ſubject will admit.

ONE would imagine that few arguments were neceſſary to prove, that an attention to outward cleanlineſs is not only commendable, but a virtue of ſome importance; and that little need be ſaid to recommend it. And, yet we find, that too many, to the diſgrace of ſociety, treat it with a ſovereign contempt; and that more neglect it through indolence, and an ignorance of its ſalutary effects.

WHATEVER conduces to make us reſpectable in the ſtation of life, in which the wiſdom of Providence hath placed us; hath a tendency to increaſe our influence among mankind; to enlarge the power which we have of being uſeful to ſociety; and to promote our own happineſs. Whatever line of conduct hath this power is virtuous, and we ought to purſue it as our duty. And as a regard to

cleanlineſs hath this tendency, therefore, cleanlineſs is a virtue which it is our duty to purſue.

That a regard to cleanlineſs hath a tendency to make us reſpected by mankind, is evident from many conſiderations.

People in the inferior ſtations of life, and eſpecially ſuch as are in the capacity of domeſtic ſervants, will find it difficult to meet with creditable employment, unleſs a character for cleanlineſs be well atteſted. Nay, there are caſes; eſpecially in ſome, I may ſay, in moſt of the female departments, where a diſregard of cleanlineſs, ſhall deprive a ſervant of a reſpectable employment; and, ſo far injure her reputation, as, either to reduce her to beggary, or, to the mortifying neceſſity of ſubmitting to the meaneſt drudgery for the ſupport of animal life.

So great an effect hath cleanlineſs upon the generality of mankind, that the meaneſt beggar at our doors ſhall conciliate our regards, and more forceably affect the feelings of humanity, only by having its appearance, joined with a modeſt diffidence, than all the entreaties and cries of the keeneſt diſtreſs, ſullied by the garb of filth and naſtineſs. By the preſence of the former the avaritious ſhall forget his parſimony, the hard-hearted ſhall drop the tear of ſympathy, and "the cold hand of charity" ſhall be ſtretched beyond the limits of prudent œconomy. A thouſand favorable allowances ſhall, at once, preſent themſelves to our minds; and the pittance we beſtow, ſhall more ſenſibly relieve ourſelves, than the object who receives it. We ſhall then experience the "Bleſſedneſs of giving." The emotions of our own breaſts ſhall convince us of the truth of that maxim, which our compaſſionate Redeemer hath left us, "That it is more bleſſed to give than to receive."—At the approach of the latter, the tender emotions of pity ſhall forget to riſe in the moſt humane breaſt; and, though the oſtentatious wordling, or the proud phariſee, may then "give their alms to be ſeen

of

of men"; yet, in general, reproach, inſtead of comfort; perſecution, inſtead of protection; and cruel neglect, inſtead of food and raiment, ſhall recompenſe the tears and importunities of filth and penury. Idleneſs, extravagance, and intemperance, or vices ſtill more ſhocking to humanity, ſhall be ſuggeſted as the direful cauſes of preſent miſery; and the dungeon pointed out, as the beſt ſecurity, to guard the intereſts of ſociety, from nuiſances ſo public, and inſufferable.

PERHAPS it may be thought, that thoſe, whoſe ſituations in life afford them a decent competency, or exalt them above dependance, are at liberty to act as their pleaſure may direct them; and that the reſt of mankind can have little concern with their conduct in this particular.

THIS, though a common mode of reaſoning, is extremely unjuſt. It is a moſt erroneous opinion, and has the worſt conſequences upon human ſociety. Such people would do well to conſider, that example is more prevailing than precept; and, that the poor not only look up to the rich and great for examples in religion and morality, but are ambitious to imitate them even in the minuteſt circumſtances of embelliſhments in dreſs. A regard, therefore, to decency and cleanlineſs in thoſe who think themſelves raiſed above the vulgar, is of ſuch indiſpenſable importance, that, without it, the preacher cannot entertain the leaſt idea favorable to his wiſhes, in ſuppoſing, that, what he has to advance can influence minds devoid of the poliſh of polite education, and almoſt unacquainted with decent propriety.

BUT let us not be miſunderſtood; it is not the tawdry appearance of finery, which we wiſh to recommend. No, "Finery is only the affectation of dreſs, and very often covers a great deal of dirt. Nothing can be more ridiculous than for any one to make himſelf a ſlave to fine cloaths. The perfection of dreſs is to be eaſy and clean."

It is a neatneſs expreſſive of a religious regard for cleanlineſs, which we wiſh to recommend to the attention of our friends.

But pardon the ſuggeſtion. I am ſenſible of having carried my advice too far. I am ſenſible that they, who are the leaſt acquainted with genteel life, and have any reſpect for their reputation, cannot forget, that a diſregard of cleanlineſs would ſo far debaſe them, as to render them ſubject to inſults of the moſt diſtreſſing nature.

Let me return then, and offer further advice to ſuch as are in general comprehended in the term, "the poor"; and if others, who are unwilling to rank themſelves in this claſs, ſhould hear any hint, as probably they may, which it may be uſeful for them to improve, I wiſh them to beſtow upon it that attention which may prevent me being put to the inconvenience of ſeeming too particular and tedious in what I have to offer.

I would, then, in the next place, recommend an attention to outward cleanlineſs, as one of the greateſt preſervatives of health.

If it be a duty, which we owe to our Maker, to preſerve the life he has given us, and to avoid any thing which may hurt our health—cleanlineſs will then appear a virtue of conſiderable magnitude, and it's contrary a vice for which we ſhall one day have to anſwer before the judge of all the earth. And, that this is the caſe, one would think muſt be manifeſt to the meaneſt underſtanding.

To ſport with our being, muſt in what ever light we view it, be highly offenſive to our Creator. Wantonly to throw our lives into eminent danger, and to ſuppoſe that God will work a miracle for our preſervation, our Savior aſſures us, is "to tempt the Lord our God"; and, to ſay the leaſt of it, muſt proceed from miſtaken views of religion,

religion, and from a falſe confidence in the Divine Providence*. To ruſh into the preſence of Almighty God, without waiting for his call, and contrary to his will and pleaſure, is ſo dreadful in idea, and ſo repugnant to every principle of religion, both revealed and natural; that we cannot but conclude it muſt proceed from a diſtempered brain, and the moſt frantic lunacy. Our being was given us for wiſe and benevolent purpoſes. Inſtead, therefore of inſulting our Creator, by the refuſal of ſo dignified a bleſſing, we ſhould gratefully receive it, and carefully improve it to the attainment of everlaſting happineſs. We ſhould take every prudent caution for the preſervation of our health and lives; that we may be ſerviceable to ſociety; ornamental to religion; and that, whenever it ſhall pleaſe God, in the courſe of his providence, to call us from this ſtate of probation, we may depart without fear or reluctance; and enter upon the enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures, which our REDEEMER has purchaſed for his faithful ſervants, and which are infinitely greater than we can at preſent conceive.

Now, I ſay, that an attention to outward cleanlineſs, is one great mean of preſerving our lives.

PERSONS who are brought up to the profeſſion of phyſic, may, when we apply for their aſſiſtance, aſſume all the appearances of conſequential dignity; and, by uſing a ſtring of their technical terms, attempt to perſuade us, that

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* IT is too much the practice of the poor and illiterate, to delay calling in a clergyman 'till the ſick are in the laſt ſtage of their diſorders, and incapable of paying any attention to the ſpiritual conſolations which he may have to offer. In this caſe, the ſick are not only deprived of receiving any advantage from their paſtor, except from his prayers, which, at ſuch a time, may as effectually be offered up in any other houſe; but the clergyman, when the diſorder is of a contagious nature, is expoſed to the danger of catching the infection himſelf, or of communicating it to the next family he viſits.

that nothing ſhort of profound erudition, joined to the moſt extenſive practical knowledge, can afford us preſent relief, or guard us againſt future inconvenience. And far be it from us, to undervalue the merits of ſo reſpectable, and uſeful a body of men; or to countenance that obſtinacy, with which many ignorant people perſiſt in refuſing their aid, even in caſes of emergency.—But, I will venture to affirm, that, if we could perſuade mankind to pay attention to the uſe of exerciſe, the practice of temperance, and the virtue of cleanlineſs; they would have leſs occaſion to apply for the helps of medicinal knowledge. They would, by theſe means, not indeed cure, all the dreadful diſorders with which man is afflicted; but they would do what is much better; they would guard themſelves againſt them, and be, in a great meaſure, ſtrangers to the ſhocking havoc of epidemical peſtilence. And it is this conſideration, I beg leave to obſerve, claims your ſerious attention, and recommends what I am offering as particularly ſeaſonable.

However, not to appear too dogmatical in my aſſertions, not to hazard the opinion of one ſo incompetent to judge in the preſent caſe, or to run the riſk of incurring unmerited cenſure; I ſhall read a paſſage from an author of the preſent age, who is no leſs reſpected for his humanity as a man, and for his good ſenſe as a writer, than for his abilities as a phyſician.—*Doctor Buchan*, in his "Domeſtic Medicine",* treating of cleanlineſs; after obſerving how neceſſary it is for the preſervation of health; and affirming that many complaints, too filthy to mention in this place, are owing to the want of it; proceeds thus, "One common cauſe of putrid and malignant fevers is the "want of cleanlineſs. Theſe fevers commonly begin "among

* This treatiſe is wrote in ſo plain and eaſy a ſtyle, and is ſo judicious and valuable a performance; that it is to be lamented, any family, who can afford to pay ſeven ſhillings for the purchaſe of a book, ſhould be deprived of its aſſiſtance.

"among the inhabitants of close dirty houses, who breathe "unwholesome air, take little exercise, and wear dirty "clothes. There the infection is generally hatched, "which often spreads far and wide, to the destruction of "many. Hence cleanliness may be considered as an ob-"ject of public attention. It is not enough that I be "clean myself, while the want of it in my neighbour "affects my health as well as his own. If dirty people "cannot be removed as a common nuisance, they ought "at least to be avoided as infectious. All who regard "their health should keep at a distance even from their "habitations."

SUCH is the opinion of this sensible and judicious writer; and how forceably it ought, at this time to strike the minds of my present audience, let the most ignorant among you judge.

How dreadful and alarming, then, must be those consequences, which proceed from the want of cleanliness! And, after this fair representation of its tendency, how great a crime must you have to answer for, who pay little regard to its effects! Can you, let me ask, can you bear the reflection of having murdered, perhaps, many of your neighbours and friends—not through the violence of any sudden impule of passion—not for the acquisition of any considerable emolument—not to satisfy any private revenge—not for any single purpose under heaven—but, merely, through an unprovoked contempt of the virtue of cleanliness! Can you support yourselves under the reflection, perhaps, of having deprived your own offspring of the existence you never gave them—of having been the butchers of those innocent pledges of your heavenly father's favor, those parts of your own flesh and blood, merely, through an unprovoked contempt of the virtue of cleanliness? Moreover; can you hurry yourselves into eternity, and appear before the Judge of heaven and earth, with all your sins unrepented of; and, above all, with that unpardonable one of having

having been your own executioners, merely, through an uprovoked contempt of the virtue of cleanlineſs?

Nor think this reaſoning unjuſt. Think not, that becauſe a fever is the cauſe of a friend's death, or of your own; that you are not chargeable with a breach of the ſixth commandment, when that which cauſed the diſeaſe was your own filth and dirt. After this fair repreſentation, you muſt be conſidered as criminal, unleſs you are attentive to your duty.

Let me aſk; has the man, who gives his acquaintance a doſe of poiſon, which cauſes his death in a few hours, more to anſwer for at the bar of infinite juſtice, than he, who by wallowing in filth and dirt; totally regardleſs of every motive that can be urged in favor of cleanlineſs; creates a diſtemper, which, in a few weeks, hurries, not only one, but numbers, of his neighbours off this ſtage of exiſtence, whoſe families are left a friendleſs and an unguarded prey to the vices of the age, and to miſery the moſt complicated and afflicting?

Be perſuaded then to regard an attention to outward cleanlineſs, as a virtue of indiſpenſable obligation.

Not to do this, eſpecially, in a manufacturing country, like this, where great numbers of the poorer ſort of people are crowded into cloſe vicinity, is ſo great a treſpaſs on the laws of humanity, that thoſe, who are daring enough to withhold obedience from an injunction of ſuch preſſing neceſſity, ought to be conſidered as public nuiſances, and treated with every ſeverity which may have a tendency to forward a reformation. Indeed, this advice is, in a meaſure, unneceſſary. The charitable part of the rich are, I am perſuaded, pretty cautious whom they relieve and protect. They ſeldom countenance any, but ſuch as they conceive are, in ſome meaſure, worthy of their notice;

tice; and nothing can ſo effectually bar every avenue to their favor and patronage, as the appearance of dirt.

The want of cleanlineſs is a crime that can admit of no poſſible excuſe from thoſe who are in health, and enjoy the uſe of their limbs. In this country plenty of water can be had at no expence, and with little trouble. It is to be hoped, therefore, that what hath been now offered to your attention will have its due effect; and, that you will not only profit by it yourſelves, but carry it home to your neighbours; and be the happy means of guarding them againſt thoſe dreadful conſequences, which proceed from the want of an attention to outward cleanlineſs.

Before I conclude, I muſt beg leave to mention one circumſtance which is eſſentially requiſite to the preſervation of health; hath a direct tendency to prevent the progreſs of many infectious diſorders; and, is ſo neceſſary a branch of cleanlineſs, that without it, this virtue cannot be ſaid to have that attention paid to it, which I would wiſh to inculcate. And this is a free and almoſt conſtant admiſſion of a current of freſh air into your habitations*. This is ſo ſalutary, and, at the ſame time, ſo refreſhing, that, when once you become accuſtomed to its indulgence, you will ſtand in no need of being reminded either of its neceſſity, or convenience.

Let us, however, whilſt we are endeavoring to ſecure the preſervation of our mortal bodies, and are conſulting our preſent intereſts, not to be unmindful of the welfare of our ſouls, and of thoſe concerns which are of eternal moment. Among the Jews, I obſerved, outward cleanlineſs

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* Since this Sermon was ſent to the preſs, the author has met with a judicious and learned treatiſe upon low and contagious fevers, written by *Dr. Campbell of Lancaſter*, whoſe opinion in general, ſeems to coincide with what has been advanced in this diſcourſe.

lineſs was intended to typify inward purity and cleanlineſs of heart. In this reſpect no difference of religious ceremonies, or change of climate, can make any alteration. We, as well as that people, ſhall advance little in the favor of heaven, unleſs we are habitually conformed to that patern of purity, which is ſet before us in the life and actions of our REDEEMER.

LET us, whilſt we poſſeſs our faith in him firm and unſhaken, ſhew the world its genuineneſs, by our obedience to his injunctions. And, when we are lamenting over our imperfections, let us not trample upon his goodneſs; nor make our confidence in his mercy an excuſe for our licentiouſneſs.

LET us pray earneſtly for "the inſpiration of God's holy ſpirit", not only to teach us the truths of the Goſpel, but "to *cleanſe* the thoughts of our hearts"; that whenever He may viſit us, and require our departure from this ſcene of miſery; we may poſſeſs that humble truſt of being intereſted in his favor, which will calm our paſſage through the valley of death, and render us at preſent but little ſolicitous whether we are invited this day, or the next, to join in the hallelujahs of thoſe perfect and exalted beings, who aſcribe "Bleſſing, and honor, glory and power unto Him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever".

FINIS.